Kennedy and Vice President

BULLETIN 8/3/70

Aide Reports Reason Johnson Was Chosen

N. Y. Times News Service

Washington — A close associate of John F. Kennedy's says Mr. Kennedy chose Lyndon B. Jhonson as his running mate in 1960 principally because he wanted to be sure that if he won the election he would have a more cooperative and trusted man than Mr. Johnson as Senate majority leader.

Kenneth P. O'Donnell was appointments secretary to Mr. Kennedy throughout his presidency and a special assistant to Mr. Johnson until January, 1965, when he resigned. He is now in a four-man race for the Democratic nomination for governor of Massachusetts. He lost a similar primary contest in 1966.

In the issue of Life magazine published today he quoted Mr. Kennedy as saying, "I'm 43 years old, and I'm the healthiest candidate for President in the United States . . . I'm not going to die in office. So the vice presidency doesn't mean anything."

Southern Votes

"I'm thinking of something else, the leadership in the Senate. If we win, it will be by a small margin and I won't be able to live with Lyndon Johnson as the leader of a small Senate majority. Did it ever occur to you that if Lyndon becomes the Vice President, I'll have Mike Mansfield as the Senate leader, somebody I can trust and depend on?"

O'Donnell says Mr. Kennedy called it essential "to make peace now with Mr. Johnson and House Speaker Sam Rayburn" so the two Democratic congressional leaders would not "ruin me" when Congress resumed after the convention.

O'Donnell quotes Mr. Kennedy a saying that without the support of Mr. Johnson and Rayburn in Congress, "I'll be the laughing stock of the country. Nixon will say I haven't any power in my own party, and I'll lose the election before labor day."

"Keeping him (Mr. Johnson) friendly until Congress adjourns . . . is more important to me than Southern votes, which I won't get anyway with the

Kenneth P. O'Donnell

Catholic thing working against me. I doubt if Lyndon will even be able to carry Texas," Mr. Kennedy reportedly added.

Carried Texas

As it developed, the Kennedy-Johnson ticket carried Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas; losing Florida, Tennessee and Virginia to the Republicans and Alabama and Mississippi to slates of unpledged electors.

The article states that President Kennedy was aware of Mr. Johnson's unhappiness as Vice President and "leaned over backwards to keep him involved in important government affairs," giving him the privilege, shared only by Robert Kennedy, of entering his White House office unannounced through the back door from the garden.

When Johnson's election campaign was approaching in 1964, the article contends, "The simple fact was that Johnson

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Kennedy Aide Tells of Choice Of Johnson

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didn't want anybody to be his vice president. He felt threatened by anyone who had a constituency. That, in Johnson's eyes, would detract from his own victory."

O'Donnell writes that Mr. Johnson wanted to try Mr. Kennedy's maneuver before the 1964 Democratic convention, and said "I've been looking at some new polls. I've decided on Mike Mansfield.

Sometime between then and the convention, Mansfield went to the White House and told Mr. Johnson: "Under no circumstances will I ever accept the nomination of Vice President."

Confirming the account, Mansfield emphasized in an interview that the President had never offered him the nomination but that he had stepped in "in case he was thinking about it."

Generally, the men involved confirmed most of the incidents in the O'Donnell article but efforts to reach Mr. Johnson for comment through his Texas aides failed.